

Governor Carney Signs House Bill 100

Legislation expands mental health services in Delaware elementary schools

NEW CASTLE, Del. – Governor John Carney on Thursday signed House Bill 100, which greatly expands mental health services in Delaware elementary schools. The legislation was sponsored by House Majority Leader Valerie Longhurst.

*“Delaware children come to school every day with unique challenges, and we should be ready to support them so they can have their best chance to be successful in the classroom,” said **Governor Carney**. “We’ll continue to invest in our public schools to make sure all Delaware children get the education they need and deserve. There’s no higher priority.”*

The Governor and bill sponsors have agreed to support technical changes to the bill in January to protect the intent of the legislation and ensure districts use additional funding to hire mental health professionals and support highest-needs students.

The Fiscal Year 2022 budget includes \$8 million to implement House Bill 100. That funding must be used to hire mental health professionals in Delaware elementary schools and cannot be supplanted.

The legislation will be fully funded in Fiscal Year 2024. Starting then, districts can work with the Delaware Department of Education and submit supplantation plans to ensure

resources are reaching the highest-needs students.

“For far too long, the mental health of our students has been treated as a secondary need – if even that much. Too many students have slipped between the gaps in our behavioral health network. The truth is, the mental health of our young students is vital to them growing, learning and becoming successful adults,” said **House Majority Leader Valerie Longhurst**. “HB 100 is a game-changer for our kids. It will establish a mental health services unit for Delaware elementary schools, allowing schools to hire more full-time school counselors, school social workers, or licensed clinical social workers to provide direct care for our youngest learners. By addressing the disparity and shortfall of mental health professionals in elementary schools, we will tackle the stresses and problems children face early, before they become a lifelong issue to overcome. I’m so grateful to Delaware State Education Association for their advocacy and determination to get this bill passed. Without them and so many others’ support, we wouldn’t have been able to achieve a unanimous victory on HB 100.”

“Far too many of young people throughout our state are dealing with real trauma at home, issues often compounded by undiagnosed mental, behavioral, and developmental disorders,” said **Sen. Marie Pinkney**, the Senate prime sponsor of HB 100. “Left unaddressed, these mental health issues present a real and serious impediment to their education and their lives. We can do better for these young people by making social workers, psychologists, and mental health counselors as commonplace in our schools as nurses have been for generations. Thank you to Governor John Carney for signing legislation today that will provide our districts and our schools with the resources they need to help our young people succeed.”

“This important legislation allows districts to hire the appropriate mental health professionals so that teachers can

concentrate on teaching and children can receive the critical services they need,” said **DSEA President Stephanie Ingram**. “HB 100 helps our youngest students and seeks to end the stigma around mental health.”

Photos from today’s bill signing can be viewed [here](#).

###